

**CAMPAIGN  
AGAINST  
MILITARISM**



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**The new Glasgow:  
from culture to  
curfew**

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# Introduction

This briefing document has been written for two reasons. Firstly, it is a contribution to the continuing discussion of Glasgow's regeneration and cultural identity. Since Glasgow's 'year of culture' in 1990, it seems that every new development in the city is couched in terms of urban renaissance. Why is this idea so important and what is really going on behind the rhetoric? Secondly, the document deals with recent changes that have taken place in Glasgow. In particular, the curfew imposed on nightclubs—which caused almost as much confusion as resentment—is explained in its broader context.

The civic identity discussion is based partly on the real regeneration that Glasgow has undergone, and partly on the increasing importance of cities on the international scene. At the same time, the debate about Glasgow fits into a wider national discussion about crime and the fear of crime. Growing anxiety about violent crime, especially knife attacks, makes the political climate increasingly conservative. More

concern is expressed about safety and less about rights. As a result, Glasgow's regeneration has taken on authoritarian overtones. The CityWatch camera surveillance scheme, for example, seeks to bring more business into the city by spying on ordinary people in the street. Consequently, the civic strategy loses any positive element of rebuilding the city centre and becomes a vehicle for anti-democratic measures.

The Campaign Against Militarism (CAM) aims to challenge the growth of authoritarianism and attacks on civil rights. Since setting up in Scotland in 1993, CAM has opposed the increase in police powers justified by knife panics, and the rise of camera surveillance. In October 1993 CAM ran a successful campaign against the nightclub curfew, which culminated in a torchlit demonstration through Glasgow's city centre. This briefing will set the scene for a continued campaign against militarism in Scotland.

# From razor gangs to the garden festival

A brief history of Glasgow's civic identity, and how it has been cultivated by the authorities

Since the late sixties Glasgow has been very preoccupied with its image. The city was at the forefront of Britain's industrial decline, and there was a consensus that Glasgow badly needed an economic boost. The 'No mean city' image of alcoholic, aggressive hard men and gangs of criminals armed to the teeth and under the tongue was seen to be a barrier to investment and to reflect a general bad attitude in the city.

But it would be wrong to see the issues of civic identity or culture simply as tools manipulated by the city authorities with a clear agenda. Genuine confusion and disorientation characterised the discussion of Glasgow's image problem.

The identification of this problem coincided with efforts to deal with the legacy of real industrial decline, and particularly the need for municipal housing. In the 1940s it was decided that the old high-density, low-quality tenements would have to be replaced. The result was that thousands of people were moved into high-rise housing schemes both inside and outside the city. At the same time, much of the manufacturing industry which survived was relocated to the edge of the city or to the new towns built outside it.

All this led to a physical, rather than a social or cultural, transformation of the city. The rigid municipalism of the city council came to be seen as a problem in itself. When the Labour administration regained control in 1980 after three years out of power, it announced an 'alternative strategy' which centred on the encouragement of private enterprise, particularly in the city centre.

In 1981, the 'Merchant City' was identified by the Central Area Local Plan as a 'Special Project Area'. Seven years later, 1964 houses had been completed, 612 were under construction and 1120 planned for the future. This project also led to the informal introduction of culture into the city centre. For example, the Merchant City's Tron theatre:

'As the theatre gradually took shape, the Tron and a number of other attractions (principally the Cafe Gandolfi) began to attract middle class attention. This new awareness of the possibilities of city-centre living, linked to the arrival of new cultural venues, jointly stimulated modest "back-to-the-city" movements.' (Booth & Boyle, 'See Glasgow, see culture' in *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration*)

This development had less to do with the city council than with the Scottish Development Agency (SDA), whose nominal concern was economic development.

A government agency set up in 1975, the SDA took on the Glasgow East Area Renewal Project (GEAR) in 1976. The £78m spent in 10 years had a massive impact on the city. The SDA also took responsibility for the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, the Templeton's carpet factory, the St Enoch's commercial site, and the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival. The success of these enterprises led to increasing collaboration between the SDA and Glasgow district council, which had undertaken similar projects in Maryhill, the Broomielaw and the Cathedral Precinct, as well as the Merchant City.

Now that urban regeneration seemed to be improving the city's image, the district council decided that it was time for a marketing assault. In 1983 the world was told that 'Glasgow's miles better'. The slogan, accompanied by the smiling figure of Mr Happy, was plastered all over the city. From the classroom to the dustcart, Glasgow's new image was inescapable.

Glasgow's new image was not so much an arbitrary solution to the bad press of the sixties as a reflection of real changes in the economic life of the city. By the 1980s around 14 000 people worked in the arts in Glasgow, far outnumbering those involved in shipbuilding (Myerscough Report, 1988). The city was also establishing itself as a centre for business services, higher education and publishing.

The flagship of the 'Glasgow's miles better' campaign was the Burrell museum, purpose-built to exhibit an eclectic collection of works of art left to the city by Sir William Burrell in 1944. The building's design was chosen through an architectural competition in 1972. Finally opened in 1983, the museum served as an apt symbol of Glasgow's cultural credibility.

The momentum was continued with the Garden Festival in 1988. An LCD countdown to the event was displayed in Central Station for months beforehand, and the festival site (in the heart of the former shipbuilding area) was promoted as a meeting place for Glasgow's cultured citizens. Children were mobilised from schools throughout Glasgow to sing for the Queen at the festival opening. The city authorities were adamant that everybody should know about the new Glasgow.

Right through the 1980s, Glasgow was sandblasted, repainted and renovated. Where there was culture, the authorities pointed to it. Saatchi & Saatchi (the PR firm credited with securing successive election victories for Margaret Thatcher) was brought in to ensure that by the time Glasgow took on the title of European City of Culture in 1990, nobody was laughing.

# Creeping authoritarianism: a chronology

## 1993

1 February: Phase Four of Operation Blade is launched. Police approach knife retailers to encourage discretion in the sale of knives. (NB Operation Blade's phases are not numbered chronologically. Phase numbers are taken from a leaflet published by Strathclyde police later in 1993).

2 February: Phase One of Operation Blade is launched. This campaign is focused around the slogan 'Bin a knife and save a life'. Collection points are established mainly in police stations, and the public is offered an amnesty to hand in unwanted knives. The campaign is heavily publicised, particularly by the *Evening Times*, and is supported by famous footballers, actors and pop stars.

12 February: Two Airdrie youths are sentenced to a total of 39 months' detention after a knife attack on another teenager. Sheriff Ian C Simpson tells them: 'Courts are taking knife assaults very seriously and offenders require to be punished severely.' (*Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser*)

18 February: Tom Kinloch, secretary of Strathclyde Police Federation, is quoted in *The Glaswegian* calling for more protection for police. 'We have recommended the adoption of the American police batons with a side-handle for defence, and would like to see far more self-defence training available for officers.' This follows the release of Strathclyde police statistics recording over 2700 attacks on officers in 1992.

2 March: Chief Constable Leslie Sharp melts down the 4500 knives recovered by Phase One of Operation Blade. At a ceremony in Hamilton, Sharp and three policemen who have been stabbed watch as the three quarters of a ton of metal are moulded into two relief statues depicting a Greek goddess.

Day One of Operation Blade's Phase Two. Police use stop and search powers under the 1953 Prevention of Crime Act to search 110 people. Sharp defends the measure in the *Evening Times*: 'No one will be stopped unless there is reasonable suspicion. It will depend on the hour, the place and the behaviour.' There are only four arrests. 'It was snowing', explains Sharp.

Phil Gallie, Conservative MP for Ayr, launches a private member's bill to outlaw the carrying of knives. The *Evening Times* claims responsibility

for the campaign leading up to the bill, which is supported by both government and opposition. The bill states that it should be 'an offence to have in a public place an article with a blade or a point'.

19 March: Nightclub curfew announced. The new package is to be implemented from the June meeting of the Licensing Board. Under the front page banner 'Late disco curb', the *Evening Times* announces that clubs will be forced to shut at 2am and takeaways at 3am, that movement between discos after midnight will be banned and that other rules regulating health and safety will be enforced. The package has been drawn up by the Licensing Board with police and other officials in response to the violence of last summer. This measure is effectively Phase Three of Operation Blade.

27 April: Quarterly crime figures released. Total crime in Strathclyde is down 15.3% against the same period last year. After 20 000 stops and searches, knife crime is down by more than a quarter and serious assault is down 11.4%, although murders are up from 15 to 19. Chief Constable Leslie Sharp attributes the reduction to the fact that more than 90% of Strathclyde's police officers are actually out on the street. Significantly, he praises the role of the media in campaigns such as Operation Blade, and argues that 'crime should never be accepted as a normal part of life' (quoted in *The Herald*).

18 May: Licensing Board passes curfew package by a 6 to 5 majority. Curfew to come into effect next month.

19 May: Ron McCulloch calls an emergency meeting of the Disco Operators Association with a view to taking legal action against the Licensing Board. He tells the *Evening Times*: 'It has never been explained why these steps are being taken. No-one has told us how they will lead to a reduction in city centre violence. I think they will lead to the opposite.'

McCulloch also points to the recent fall in crime and to the package of measures proposed by the disco operators themselves. These included the licensing of club stewarding and direct hotlines from nightclubs to the police. It transpires that although the disco operators had been promised a meeting with the Licensing Board before any final decision, no such meeting had taken place.

9 June: First night of the curfew. 400 people excluded

from Club Exchange alone. It is raining and there is a lot of resentment. Brendan Nash, manager of Club Exchange, is frustrated: 'Everyone's agitated and panicky, and there's nothing we can do about it.' (*Evening Times*) The curfew affects 26 clubs in the city centre, significantly excepting Victoria's, which has an older and more up-market clientele.

Disco International (trade association) gives Scottish Club of the Year award to Glasgow's The Tunnel. Owner Ron McCulloch (also head of the Disco Operators Association) is more preoccupied with the Licensing Board. He tells the *Evening Times*: 'After a four-hour meeting [on 8 June], with five lawyers speaking on our behalf, the council just weren't interested—our case was decided before we even went in.' He is now asking for a judicial review.

10 June: The *Evening Times* launches a phone poll to find out the popular response to the curfew.

14 June: *Evening Times* phone poll results published. Over 600 people took part in the poll (run by Newstel Information Ltd). 85% are against the midnight lockdown, 86% oppose the 2am shutdown, and 89% believe that the curfew will be ineffective in cutting down crime. After 5 days of the curfew, there is anxiety about job losses in the clubs, and about increasing 'happy hours' as pubs try to stop a sudden rush to clubs before midnight.

October: The curfew is extended to Glasgow's West End. Most notably, The Volcano (sister club of The Tunnel) is now affected.

The Campaign Against Militarism launches a campaign against the curfew and the imminent CityWatch surveillance scheme. Posters appear across the city with the slogan 'Campaign Against Militarism v Strathclyde police state'.

The Licensing Board announces a liberalisation of the curfew for four weeks over the Christmas and New Year period. Doors can remain open until 12.30 and clubs don't have to shut until 3am.

22 October: Over 200 people take part in the Campaign Against Militarism's torchlit demonstration against the curfew.

The City council denies permission for an anti-curfew concert planned by 'Freedom of the City' (a group set up in opposition to the curfew by musicians Angus Farquhar and Bobby Bluebell). The free concert had been proposed for 5 November in George Square and was to feature The Shamen.

19 November: The Freedom of the City event goes ahead after the council withdraws its ban. Thousands of young people fill George Square to see The Shamen and protest against the curfew.

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14 January: The Licensing Board extends the Christmas curfew liberalisation indefinitely. This is presented as a benefit of the CityWatch surveillance scheme, soon to be introduced.

17 March: Licensing Board chairman Jim Coleman condemns nightclub owners for their failure

to contribute to the CityWatch surveillance scheme. According to the GDA, no clubs have contributed, although both Victoria's and The Tunnel claim to have sent money for the scheme. Coleman insists that the relaxing of the curfew was based on the introduction of surveillance cameras, and suggests that the clubs 'put up or shut up' (*Evening Times*).

2 April: A man is stabbed to death in Glasgow city centre. Several arrests are made for possession of knives. This Easter weekend is later referred to as a 'weekend of violence'.



# The new Glasgow: from culture to curfew

Glasgow's most recent regeneration project, the CityWatch camera surveillance scheme, is the most striking example of how the authorities have linked authoritarian measures with the promotion of Glasgow's cultural image. The use of the slogan 'Bringing the people back to the city' gives the gloss of urban regeneration to a measure which elsewhere has been sold simply as a crime prevention scheme. While CityWatch emphasises concern about crime, the agency behind the scheme, the Glasgow Development Agency, has been careful to play up the social and even cultural benefits for the city, as well as the more straightforward commercial benefits.

'Greater international awareness of Glasgow as a "safe city" will obviously have a knock-on effect as tourists increasingly look towards Glasgow as an attractive option. The entertainment sector will of course enjoy the benefits of the CityWatch scheme....' (CityWatch brochure)

If 'safe city' seems a somewhat conservative aspiration for such a cultural metropolis, it is worth looking at the climate in which this outlook has developed. While promotions such as 'Glasgow: City of Culture' have been successful in terms of business and in giving a degree of confidence to people involved in the arts in Glasgow, they have not given the city the sense of social dynamism that was promised.

Rather than culture acting as a panacea to all of Glasgow's problems as a 'post-industrial' city in a slump-ridden Britain, its most significant effect has been to give a boost to the image of Glasgow and to inform the way in which the city deals with its problems.

The promotion of Glasgow as a cultural city has never been unproblematic. Art alone cannot solve the problem of unemployment, and even a city with a brand new concert hall has social tensions. In 1988 there were angry letters to the *Evening Times* protesting about the price charged for admission to the Garden Festival, and in 1990 stickers appeared on lamp-posts proclaiming 'Workers' City'. There was a feeling that the City of Culture was excluding real Glaswegians, and even those citizens who enjoyed their subsidised jazz felt no enthusiasm for the city's administration.

In order to understand how Glasgow has developed, we have to look at the institutions involved in the promotion of its cultural civic identity. The Glasgow Development Agency (GDA), whose ominous 'omega' symbol can be seen on building sites throughout the city, has been the

most prominent agency in recent years, undertaking ventures from the Royal Concert Hall to the CityWatch scheme.

The GDA is the largest 'local enterprise company' within the Scottish Enterprise network and was created through the merger of some of the most important institutions concerned with Glasgow's regeneration: Glasgow Action and the Glasgow offices of the SDA and Training Agency.

The agency is keen to emphasise its continuity with the past in its commitment to making Glasgow 'one of the great cities of Europe'. Its first three-year business plan outlines its strategy of 'regenerating business performance' and 'enhancing workforce skills'.

The association of the GDA with Glasgow's cultural identity is undoubtedly an advantage. Although the agency cooperates with Glasgow district council and the Strathclyde police on projects such as CityWatch, it is ostensibly independent and is working 'for the benefit of the people and businesses of Glasgow' (GDA brochure). The real, if limited, regeneration of the city and the subsequent promotion of civic identity give this type of jargon a credibility that would be very difficult to achieve in other cities.

The success of the civic strategy can be seen by contrasting the experience of CityWatch to date, with that of the nightclub curfew. In both cases the authorities have been attempting to deal with a real problem, which is not crime itself so much as the insecurity and lack of confidence in authority that underlies the increased discussion of crime.

The curfew was the culmination of a police campaign against knife crime. Although there was real concern about stabbings, and particularly slashings, in the city, this campaign had little credibility outside the pages of the *Evening Times*. The idea that chib-carrying neds would simply surrender their arms at their local police station was seen as ridiculous, and the stops and searches annoyed those who were stopped, while doing little to bolster anyone's confidence in the police.

The curfew itself outraged the city's youth and was seen to be bad for business. Instigated by a 14-member Licensing Board with a combined age of 750 years and led by the not-very-cultural Labour councillor Jim Coleman, the curfew was widely received as an affront to Glasgow's cultural identity. The police policed the curfew without actually promoting it as anything to do with them.

The Glasgow Disco Operators Association,

originally set up at the request of the police in order to coordinate the response to 'disco violence', was furious. Stephen Mowat, manager of Victoria's, played the civic card right away:

'We look after so many dignitaries when they come to the city. How can we tell them that Glasgow shuts at 2am? What will they think?' (*Sunday Times*, 13 June 1993)

The nightclub curfew was an attack on several sections of the city's population, contradicting the image that Glasgow was trying to promote, and still achieving very little in terms of restoring confidence in the authorities. The gradual relaxation of the measure was almost inevitable.

There is, however, one very important legacy of the curfew. The right of the authorities to restrict the movements of Glasgow's citizens in the name of the fight against crime has secured wide acceptance. The curfew is perceived to be ineffective and inappropriate for Glasgow, a 'crass knee-jerk action' as one club-runner put it (*Sound City Brochure*), but as long as crime anxiety dominates discussion, Glasgow is open to a more sophisticated synthesis of authoritarianism with the city's cultural identity. Enter CityWatch.

CityWatch was first proposed in February 1993, principally by the GDA, supported by Glasgow district council and by local business. The scheme was based on similar ventures in British towns like Wolverhampton and Newcastle, and especially in Airdrie, just outside Glasgow. The idea was that business was suffering because people were afraid to come into the city centre, and a GDA poll indicated that 20% of the population would spend more time there if the cameras were installed.

The scheme is intended to increase business through reducing crime and generally to introduce a 'feel-good factor' to the city. It is also suggested that surveillance could deal with lesser problems such as fly-posting, graffiti, litter and loitering. There is an implicit suggestion that young people hanging out are messing up the city. But the scheme's advocates are keen to emphasise the positive benefits that cameras can offer to Glasgow, rather than simply presenting it as a crime-busting measure.

Before going public, CityWatch had the financial support of Glasgow's retail businesses, in particular Marks & Spencer's, who had previously complained about the state of Argyle Street. Businesses hope to benefit from a safer, cleaner image for Glasgow, and CityWatch's poll figures back them up. Nonetheless, wrangling over how much business is expected to pay, and delays in the timing of the scheme certainly suggest that the original motivation was not narrowly economic.

It is likely that the GDA floated the idea some time ago, inspired by the fear of crime in the city and by the agency's constant search for a civic idea. Not surprisingly, Glasgow district council was among the first backers of the plan, and the recent call by the Licensing Board for nightclubs to contribute suggests that they too are still very much onside.

Even after the announcement of the scheme and the launch of CityWatch, however, there was further

consultation and mediation. The original proposal was for 32 cameras in trouble-spots identified by the police, and also suggested a 30-strong warden force (unique in Europe) to help police the streets. The CityWatch Trust (GDA) also suggested that the camera control and monitoring centre at Stewart Street police station should be manned by disabled civilians employed through the 'Remploi' scheme.

A debate ensued in which it became clear that the police would not tolerate a civilian warden force, and would also be more comfortable with police officers manning the control centre. The police-identified trouble-spots were areas such as around Central Station, where working class youth tend to congregate at night. This adds to the impression of a selective and divisive civic policy.

The police input was subtle and relatively low-profile (it was covered in *The Herald* rather than the *Evening Times*). Presented as professional advice to an independent civic/commercial venture, it was undoubtedly less controversial than it would have been had the police proposed the scheme themselves.

Tentative opposition was voiced by the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties (SCCL). While recognising the security benefits of camera surveillance, the group was concerned about problems such as the range of the cameras. It would be unacceptable to them, for example, if the cameras could see into people's homes. As a result of this concern, the SCCL agreed to monitor the scheme, so as to protect civil liberties. This agreement gave CityWatch a degree of legitimacy it could not otherwise have achieved.

CityWatch started as a proposal by the GDA, and was sold as being firmly based on its aims of supporting business by promoting Glasgow. As the idea developed, every important interest in the city had some kind of input. By the time CityWatch is actually launched (probably in summer 1994), it will serve as an excellent example of how Glasgow's civic identity has been used to express the interests of the people who run Glasgow, and of how those interests have converged in a scheme to keep an eye on Glasgow's population, and to keep it under control.